

---

## *Tips - Only you can Help Prevent Boxwood Blight!*

---

It is that time of year where we begin hearing about and discovering boxwood blight expressing itself on plants in nurseries and landscapes. **Already a few cases at retail nurseries this Fall associated with nursery stock shipped in from out of state.**

**One newer twist for 2017 is Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension is reporting cases in the landscape where the disease was likely spread by pruning tools and other equipment.** It is an unfortunate reality that boxwood blight can be spread by spores and microsclerotia and these propagules can be carried on and by almost anything between sites if they are not washed and sanitized. Hoses are a good example of a tool that might be overlooked as a potential carrier. I cannot over emphasize to folks the importance of sanitation when working with boxwood in landscapes. **Folks need to wash and sanitize all tools and equipment, hoses, boots, anything that touches boxwood or touches the ground around boxwood during landscape maintenance between sites.** Remember; once the disease is spread to a site we have found it is very hard to eradicate. Even traces of inoculum can result in severe disease expression during wet years due to repeating disease cycles.

Boxwood are used in a variety of ways in the landscape. We see that compact shrubs of the 'American' and 'English' boxwood and some related hybrids are very prone to developing severe defoliation from boxwood blight due to their compact crowns. Plants in the shade are also more prone to

developing severe defoliation. Much of this relates to micro-site and leaf wetness period. We have yet to see what boxwood blight may have in store for larger specimens of 'American boxwood' at Virginia's historical sites which can have stems with diameters 6 inches and greater.

The most severe defoliation we have observed is in the lower crowns of boxwood. One theory is larger diameter specimens in which the lower crowns have been pruned by man or nature may allow these older specimens to maintain healthy upper crowns due to more airflow and drier micro-site higher up off the ground. A lot remains to be seen. I am very hopeful that over time we will adapt to this disease; keeping older specimens around when deemed appropriate, redesigning gardens to reduce leaf wetness periods, applying well timed applications of protectant fungicides, and installing more resistant species and cultivars of boxwood overtime. While I have great hope based on all the research findings and field observations over the past several years, this is not a time to let our guard down. **Please continue do your part to control the spread. Only you can help prevent the spread of boxwood blight.**

**Virginia Tech Best Management Guides for Boxwood Blight:** <https://ext.vt.edu/agriculture/commercial-horticulture/boxwood-blight.html>



Figure 1. Streaking on boxwood blight stems is a classic symptom of boxwood blight.



Figure 2. Compact boxwood shrub with severe blight and defoliation and the base of plant.



Figure 3. This large boxwood tree was planted before the Revolutionary War and survived gun and cannon fire during a large battle during Civil War. Research and field observations provide hope these specimens will remain for many years. Do your part to slow the spread of boxwood blight.

*Norman Dart, VDACS State Plant Pathologist. 10/10/17*

---

## ***News - Winner of Field Day Plant ID Contest***

---

Field day was quite successful for 2017. Each year we have a Plant ID Contest. **This year's winner is Dolly Little of Four Seasons Nursery.** She won \$20 for her winning entry.